

“Don’t Give Up, Don’t EVER Give UP!”

(By Richard “Tree” Ogletree, Bd. 12 DC and
John Powers, Bd. 23 MD)

It wasn’t going to be a pleasant hospital visit but we had to go, after all she was one of us—an IAABO Official. She had had a bone marrow transplant a few days prior and frankly I didn’t think she was going to recognize us. Kay Lewis was literally fighting for her life, she was fighting breast cancer and this was her last chance. Our board treasurer and I went in to her room at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We knew the score, it was late in the 4th quarter and Kay’s team was down, it wasn’t looking too good for the home team. If this procedure didn’t work, Kay would lose her battle to breast cancer, probably within a year. We visited for a while, we told her to keep fighting and reminded her of Coach V’s immortal words, “Don’t give up, don’t EVER give up!”

Kay didn’t give up, to my knowledge she has never given up. In fact, she got better, then she got up, then she rebuilt her life. That was 2 years ago. Today Kay is a cancer survivor—she’s an active Board 12 DC.

Donna Hopkins played college basketball and made it to the pros, but she too had breast cancer. Much like Kay’s, Donna is also a breast cancer survivor. She runs the Donna Up for Breast Cancer Tournament. This tournament raises over \$10,000, mostly from the District of Columbia area. These women need a little extra help to pay for a doctor’s ap-



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making copayments for their medicines. And through the efforts of Donna and almost a hundred others who donated their time, this year was no different. Actually, that’s not entirely true. This year was both the same and different.

Over the past several years the “Hoop-It-Up” for Breast Cancer Tournament has gained notoriety in the District of Columbia area. The basketball is now very competitive in both the men’s and women’s divisions. There are former NBA players, many former college players and this year several WNBA players. The basketball level is high and the competitive attitude is intense. Officials must be experienced enough to handle games that include “alley-oop” slam dunks, players who can and do shoot from anywhere and women who are big, strong and quick. Glance outside your primary for too long, then as players sometimes quip “you’re missing a good game ref!” And in this tournament they’d be right.

However, more important than experience for an official working these games is . . . their heart! That’s right, their heart. The referees understand that “Hoop It Up for Breast Cancer” is a charity tournament. These IAABO men and women donate their time and considerable skills to help others. They do it because they either know or have loved ones who are breast cancer victims and survivors. They do it for a simple “thank you.” They do it because they’re using their IAABO training to help someone who needs a helping hand fighting breast cancer; trying not to give up, not to ever give up.

Over 3 dozen games, over 3 days, all with 3-person crews had to be officiated. Experienced officials with compassionate hearts, competitive basketball teams contributing entry fees to the charity and celebrity professional athletes hosting the tournament, those things were the same this year. However, this year the tournament site and the referee crew that worked the opening game were different.

The only gym facility that could handle the tournament was an hour away, in neighboring Board 134’s area. While the location was different, the cooperation was the same. Once again IAABO Board’s 12, 23 and 134 sent officials. Once again officials came from out of State to help, this year as far away as California. So, while some things were different, some were the same.

Oh yeah, and the referee crew that worked the opening game that was “different” this year? The “R” in that crew was none other than Kay Lewis! Yes, the same IAABO referee who was fighting breast cancer and who 2 years earlier had a bone marrow transplant, the same referee who didn’t give up. Along with 36 IAABO officials who have a heart for others less fortunate, this year was the same—but different. Thanks IAABO, you were there and you made a difference. Let’s do the same next year!